**Blog Basics (from** [**http://teachingtoday.glencoe.com/howtoarticles/blog-basics**](http://teachingtoday.glencoe.com/howtoarticles/blog-basics) **)**

***Not sure what others are talking about when they mention blogs? Read this article and you'll soon know what all the talk is about.***

Teachers have picked up on the creative use of this Internet technology and put the blog to work in the classroom. The education blog can be a powerful and effective technology tool for students and teachers alike.  
  
**What is a blog?**  
A blog is a Web publishing tool that allows authors to quickly and easily self-publish text, artwork, links to other blogs or Web sites, and a whole array of other content.  
  
Blogs are set-up like conventional Web sites, with navigation links, and other standard Web site features. A blog is different from a typical Web site in that the primary content is comprised of a daily *posting.* Blog postings are text entries, similar to a diary or journal, which include a posting date. They include subsequent comments made by people other than the author. Postings are often short and frequently updated. They appear in reverse chronological order and can include archived entries.

Blogs work well for students because they can be worked on at virtually any time, in any place with an Internet-enabled computer. Hence, they can be used by teachers to create a classroom that extends beyond the boundaries of the school yard.  
  
**User-Friendly Technology**  
Blogs are surprisingly easy to use. They require minimum technical knowledge and are quickly and easily created and maintained. Unlike many traditional Web sites, they are flexible in design and can be changed relatively easily. Best of all, students will find them convenient and accessible via home or library computers.  
  
**Educational Benefits of Blogs**  
In addition to providing teachers with an excellent tool for communicating with students, there are numerous educational benefits of blogs. Blogs are

* motivating to students, especially those who otherwise might not become participants in classrooms
* excellent opportunities for students to read and write.
* effective forums for collaboration and discussion.
* powerful tools to enable scaffolded learning or mentoring to occur.

**Using the Blog in the Classroom**  
As an educational tool, blogs may be integrated in a multi-faceted manner to accommodate all learners. Blogs can serve at least four basic functions.

1. ***Classroom Management***  
   Class blogs can serve as a portal to foster a community of learners. As they are easy to create and update efficiently, they can be used to inform students of class requirements, post handouts, notices, and homework assignments, or act as a question and answer board.
2. ***Collaboration***  
   Blogs provide a space where teachers and students can work to further develop writing or other skills with the advantage of an instant audience. Teachers can offer instructional tips, and students can practice and benefit from peer review. They also make online mentoring possible. For example, a class of older students can help a class of younger students develop more confidence in their writing skills. Students can also participate in cooperative learning activities that require them to relay research findings, ideas, or suggestions.
3. ***Discussions***  
   A class blog opens the opportunity for students to discuss topics outside of the classroom. With a blog, every person has an equal opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions. Students have time to react to ideas and reflect on learning. Teachers can also bring together a group of knowledgeable individuals for a given unit of study for students to network and conference with on a blog.
4. ***Student Portfolios***  
   Blogs present, organize, and protect student work as digital portfolios. As older entries are archived, developing skills and progress may be analyzed more conveniently. Additionally, as students realize their efforts will be published, they are typically more motivated to produce better writing. Teachers and peers may conference with a student individually on a developing work, and expert or peer mentoring advice can be easily kept for future reference.

**Blog Risks to Consider**  
School districts have guidelines and acceptable use policies (AUP) regarding the use of school and division-wide computer networks and the Internet. These terms and conditions identify acceptable online behavior and access privileges. Policies regarding the displaying of any student work must be adhered to strictly. Take the necessary steps to secure parental permission before using the blog in a participatory manner.  
  
Blogs may be viewed publicly, as any other Web site. Students must be trained on issues regarding access, privacy, security, and free expression. As blogs have no publisher, producer, or editor, students must carefully consider the content of postings to avoid anything defamatory, libelous, or infringing upon the rights of others.  
  
Blogs are created by individuals for various and assorted purposes. Content should be recognized as the opinion of the blogger, and, therefore, may not necessarily be factual.  
  
**Preparing Students for Blogging**

* Determine that all students' AUPs are in place and up to date.
* Inform parents of procedures and secure parental permission.
* Teach students safe, acceptable, and sensible behavior as online authors and readers.
* Review policies and guidelines pertaining to student access.
* Teach the non-posting rules of no complete names, e-mail accounts, or references to reveal location.
* Set clear expectations regarding tone, respect, and consequences.

**Steps for Getting Started on Blogs**  
There are a number of free blogging tools available.

1. Go to one of the available free blogging sites ([www.kidblog.com](http://www.kidblog.com) )
2. Provide the necessary information requested. (user name, password)
3. Create a title for your blog.
4. Accept terms and select a template.
5. Publish!